



Billingshurst Primary School
Headteacher : Helen Williamson BSc (Hons) MA
Station Road, Billingshurst, West Sussex RH14 9RE
Tel: 01403 782789 Fax: 01403 783124
e-mail: office@billingshurstprimary.org.uk
website: www.billingshurstprimary.org.uk

Thursday 22nd October 2020

Update on the first half term back in school

Dear Parents and Carers

As we approach the end of the first half term I thought it was important to update you on how things are progressing, what we are doing to help your child 'catch up' and what we plan ahead.

I am happy to repeat, endlessly, that I am so impressed with how your children have returned to school after the disruption of the lockdown and partial return to school for some in the summer and for the majority in September. This gives me great confidence that they will 'catch up' quickly and I want to share with you what we are doing to achieve this.

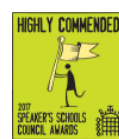
At BPS we firmly believe that our children will make the best progress and 'catch up' quickly with an exciting, creative and broad curriculum. Narrowing the children's experience to English and maths in an attempt to rapidly accelerate the basic skills will, in my opinion, only turn them off learning. I think our approach is working because the children are happy and enjoying the exciting learning taking place. We continue with our Flexible Friday approach because of this – the need for children to be engaged, excited and independent. We are not going to derive a 'Catch up' curriculum for this very reason – we are going to use our revised and creative curriculum to help them make the progress needed.

There has been a lot of media attention about how far behind children are but I would challenge this for most of our children. They were definitely out of practice, whenever they returned to school, and there will be gaps but we can close these quickly - this is already evident. At primary school, the curriculum has many opportunities to repeat content and this is what we have done – we have taken these opportunities evident in the curriculum, to return to cover any gaps in knowledge missed since February. This is fairly easily addressed.

In terms of skills, each child will have different needs and this is normal, post lockdown or in normal days. Our teachers have spent this term assessing how your children are doing in each lesson, providing feedback to the children about what they need to focus on, and then adapting the next day's lesson to address issues or move the children on. This is called assessment for learning and it is how we meet the individual needs of each child. To get children back up to speed in things such as writing, handwriting, numerical fluency etc is the focus of each lesson.

However, there are some things that have been missed and we are making adaptations to address this. Phonics, reading and spelling is a key example as each year group has a specific curriculum. Reading in KS1 is being specifically adapted to cover the previous year's missing content, as is phonics, and then spelling in KS2. Children in Year 3 who are not yet fluent readers will be using the reading scheme as they would have done in Year 2. In KS2 year groups are going back over the previous year's spelling content. This has to be done as children cannot progress with gaps in their knowledge.

Other areas require the children to get back up to speed by practising skills. Each morning, across the school, we dedicate the start of day activities to a different aspect



each day – times tables/number bonds one day, sentence construction another day. These are all at the appropriate level for each year group but help children recall previously gained skills that might have become a bit rusty over lock down.

We are assessing all of these approaches, and monitoring how the children are progressing as we go, and will make any adjustments as we proceed – each year group will be doing this with the oversight of senior leaders who have a view of this across the school. You may be aware of the 'catch up' funding, part of which we will receive this term. Following our successful PPG review, which highlighted the success of the team of Intervention Teachers, we have extended this strategy to ensure each year group has the support of an intervention teacher to help children with greater gaps and in need of further support. We will not be employing tutors as our evidence shows children learn best and make the best progress in the classroom, with teachers they know and with a relevant and exciting curriculum. Intervention teachers, although a limited resource even still, are there to work with children when they need more than this. Ensuring there is one in each year group is effective use of this funding and we welcome Miss Dowley to the team. Most children will not need this level of intervention and parents should understand that their child will make all the progress needed now they are back in school. This resource is targeted to the children who need it.

After half term, the whole school is launching into a two week project on a shared book 'The Quiet Music of Gently Falling Snow' by Jackie Morris. Jackie Morris illustrated the amazing Lost Words book we used two years ago and the book for this year is as exquisitely beautiful as Lost Words. It will inspire the children's writing, music, art and many other aspects of the curriculum. We really look forward to sharing the children's work and their learning with you, albeit virtually.



Please have a look at our new website too. Some areas are still being updated and I will let you know when new content is uploaded. We have on the front page a few of the lovely photos taken recently and more will be added across the site soon.

If you have any questions about your child, please contact your teacher. Information about parents evening will be coming soon and you will be able to have a 10 minute telephone conversation about your child, their progress and achievements.

Yours sincerely

Helen Williamson
Headteacher